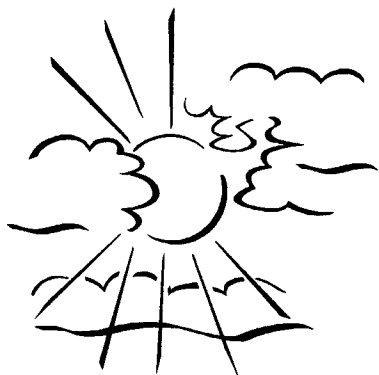


***Department
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Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, June 27, 2005

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GOP plan would cut welfare rolls

Opponents argue move would hurt poor families

PUBLISHED: June 24, 2005

By Chad Selweski
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Living in a shelter with her six children, pregnant with a seventh child on the way, Tuana Henry was working a day shift and attending school at night.

Receiving partial welfare assistance from the state Department of Human Services because of her minimal wages, Henry was encouraged by her teachers to put her job training program on pause until she gave birth. A recipient of welfare benefits on and off since 1994, Henry, 30, agreed to accept a full welfare check until her situation improved.

"I'm glad the program is there for me. I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't," said Henry, a single mother from Clinton Township. "I've tried to stay off the (welfare) system, but certain things have set me back."

Those setbacks have included a struggle with a mental illness and the trauma of dealing with the abusive father of three of her children.

Republican lawmakers look at situations like Henry's and see a woman who should have her welfare benefits cut off, as an incentive to seek employment. Those who work in the welfare system say that Henry's circumstances demonstrate the need to continue assistance -- and job training -- until employment is secured.

Under the proposed state budget adopted by the GOP-controlled House, welfare benefits would be ended after a combined -- not consecutive -- four years on the dole. That would eliminate an estimated 13,000 families and 36,000 children from assistance, effective Jan. 1.

The average family, a single mother with two children, receives about \$400 a month.

At a forum held in Clinton Township Thursday by the Department of Human Services, DHS workers and Henry outlined the case for rejecting the House GOP plan.

Angelo Nicholas, Macomb director of DHS, said that 315 Macomb County families, with 766 children, would be removed from the welfare rolls under the House plan. Of those long-term cases, 91 percent have

received a deferral from job training and job replacement requirements. These exemptions are granted for a narrow group of people whose employment prospects are limited: grandparents raising grandchildren; the disabled; parents with a child or spouse who is incapacitated; and recipients approaching senior citizen status.

House Republicans say surrounding states have tougher welfare rules and the Michigan system, with no cut-off date, fosters dependence on government payments. Four years is sufficient time, they say, for any person hampered by economic or personal woes to get back on their feet. Critics of the plan say that virtually every state offers exemptions for "hardship" cases, which are needed here to compensate for the struggling Michigan economy. They also contend that welfare "myths" -- that welfare recipients are lazy and don't want to work -- are driving the Lansing agenda.

"Thank goodness our Lord doesn't give us a limit like that: four years to make it or you're 'out,'" said Roger Facione, chairman of the county Social Services Board and pastor of a Lutheran church in Warren. "This ... is saying that, suddenly, they will have no support and they're supposed to figure this all out."

As for Henry, her greatest fear is losing her benefits and having her children placed in foster care. She is about six months away from completing classroom training to become a medical assistant or a patient care technician, which would open the door to numerous hospital jobs.

"I don't like sitting home," she said. "I don't want a check. I want to get a check for work that I do."

Proposed legislation could cut services to needy

by Erica Goff
Herald Staff Writer

The Gratiot County Department of Human Services could face a drastic situation if the Omnibus budget bill approved last week by the state House of Representatives becomes law.

The legislation would cut 600 DHS jobs across the state and eliminate a financial safety net that is necessary for a number of local families and a significant percent of Medicaid recipients to survive, said Jan Baszler, DHS director for Gratiot and Clinton counties.

The bill would eliminate state

funding and leave many low-income families with no financial support.

"People pay taxes to have this safety net. No one is going to take on the role of government to support these people," Baszler said.

The effects of the Omnibus bill will have its strongest effects on the county in three areas: cash assistance to low-income families who have received that assistance for more than four years, two Medicaid programs, and DHS staffing cuts.

The first area of concern required Baszler to conduct some research as to the direct effects of

a limit on receipt of cash assistance to poor families, which is proposed in the Omnibus bill. The suggestion is to cut low-income families off of assistance after a 48-month period.

Baszler said many people would think four years is long enough to receive help and that the limit is justifiable, so she wanted to do a "profile" on the cases in Gratiot County that would be affected by the limit. She said 13 families currently receiving assistance have been in the program for more than four years, but their situations explain that it is necessary.

"These people are unemployed-

able. They are either too physically handicapped, are caring for someone who is handicapped or ill, or have too low of job skills," she said. "Without this assistance they could not continue, and they have no other options."

The monthly cost to support these 13 families is currently \$7,262 per month. When considering the 31 children involved, the resulting expenses of taking them from their homes and putting them in even the lowest cost child care environment would be \$13,909, which is a significant cost increase.

"This is not only a bad family

situation, it is a bad fiscal idea. No one wins," Baszler said.

The next area of concern involves two cuts to Medicaid programs. The first would eliminate Medicaid eligibility of 18 to 20 year olds, which MLHS officials say would merely shift costs to other areas of the health care system because the individuals would be forced to turn to emergency rooms for more costly and uncompensated care.

The other proposed Medicaid cut is to caretaker relatives. Baszler said those eligible are low-income

(See OMNIBUS, page 30A)

OMNIBUS

Continued from page 3

individuals who have youth also receiving Medicaid living in their home. The lack of this financial assistance is also likely to force children into out-of-home living situations.

"The availability of the Medicaid support keeps the kids in family atmosphere instead of in foster care," she said. "That would again be a cost to the state."

There are 673 caretaker cases in Gratiot County, and 267 cases of 18 to 20 -year-olds receiving Medicaid. The Omnibus proposal of making these families ineligible for support would be devastating, Baszler said.

"It would mean 940 cases would be closed. We only have a total of 3,341 cases in the county," she explained. "That means 28 percent of people receiving Medicaid would lose it, and that is significant."

Baszler said those 940 cases involve people who have "no other options" and would be left uninsured, with no health care assistance.

The third major element of concern in the Omnibus bill is the proposal to cut 600 DHA positions statewide. Two reductions in allocations already faced by DHS have left staffs in both Clinton and Gratiot counties stretched to the limit, Baszler said.

"I'm not sure what to do with my staff. They are already facing too high of a work load, and I can't keep pushing them," she added.

DHS workers are already servicing a number of cases well over the state standard, and as those figures increase and salaries decrease, staff conditions become less and less favorable. When

faced with the possibility of further staffing reductions, Baszler fears the repercussions inside and outside the office.

"It could have a horrendous effect. It is the customers who are going to be hurt," she said. "We are trying to keep up our standards but you can only keep pushing for so long."

Since fiscal year 2005, statewide DHS services have faced an unfavorable combination of a 20 percent decrease in funding and staff with a 38 percent increase in caseloads in the same timeframe.

Baszler feels lucky because Gratiot County still has a 100-percent staffing level.

"No one has left from Gratiot, but two members left in Clinton County and we have been working with an 80 percent staff," Baszler said "The state won't allow us to fill those positions."

The DHS is working statewide to discourage the progression of the Omnibus proposal. Last week's House approval will send it to the Senate, which will likely be followed by negotiations between the House, the Senate, and the governor.

Baszler said some good news is that Gov. Jennifer Granholm is not in favor of the cuts, and some debate is expected.

The plan of action is to involve the public and educate about the realities of the bill.

"We are trying to advocate for a different consideration in the budget cycle. We need to look at this and decide whether these are really the cuts that the general taxpayer in Michigan thinks are a good idea," Baszler said.

Other elements of the Omnibus proposal include reduced assistance levels; curbing of Medicaid spending by instituting premiums, co-pays and deductibles for impoverished recipients; reduc-

tion of child day care and foster care spending; and elimination of training for child welfare workers. Information from Michigan's children, a statewide child advocacy organization, projected possible impacts the bill could have on the state's vulnerable children. Those impacts come from reductions in the areas of: child abuse and neglect prevention programs; child care services,

including payments to relatives who care for children; vital public health prevention programs such as infant mortality reduction, lead poisoning prevention,

hearing and vision screening and minority health programs; child care licensing; and training for children's protective services and foster care workers.

In Effort to Pare Medicaid, Long-Term Care Is Focus

By JANE GROSS

Published: June 27, 2005

The New York Times

Congress is holding hearings. The governors have a plan. The Bush administration has named a commission. Insurance companies have weighed in, and so have lawyers and the AARP.

The idea is to restrain the explosive growth in the taxpayers' contribution to the cost of long-term care for middle-class Americans in frail old age by making it harder to qualify for government benefits and shifting costs to individuals and private insurers.

Lawmakers, health policy experts and stakeholders in the long-term-care industry are rushing forward with proposals to remove from the Medicaid rolls people who are not poor by standard definitions, but who rather have exhausted a lifetime of resources or used legal strategies to give their money away.

There is plenty of argument about which proposals are best, but the broad consensus is that none, alone or in combination, will do much to cut government spending or provide older Americans an affordable and ethical way to pay for long-term care. And the need for a solution is critical; Medicaid, a government program created for the poor, is straining to cover two-thirds of the nation's 1.6 million nursing home residents, many of them real estate rich but cash poor.

Experts agree that many of the proposals are likely to be enacted in the coming year. "The governors are screaming bloody murder," said Keith D. Lind, a senior policy adviser at the AARP Public Policy Institute. "There is a consensus that something has to be done that will significantly change the program."

The most popular idea is to slow eligibility by extending the so-called lookback period, during which older people can give away or shelter assets and not be penalized when applying for Medicaid. Now, those gifts need to be made at least three years before a Medicaid application; soon, experts expect the period to be extended to five years.

Another proposal would require owners of family homes, many of which are now exempt from Medicaid calculation, to take out reverse mortgages to pay for nursing home care. Other proposals would encourage states to put liens on these houses when nursing home residents die to reimburse Medicaid for the cost of their care.

Most of the proposals that encourage private insurance would offer tax credits or tax deductions to those who purchase long-term-care policies, a relatively new product that has been slow to catch on. Equally popular is expanding the use of so-called partnership policies - now allowed in New York, California, Connecticut and Indiana - under which individuals who purchase

insurance and exhaust its benefits are eligible for Medicaid and able to protect a fixed amount of money for their heirs.

But these are considered small fixes, not the overhaul that health policy experts say is the only way to save the system.

"What we have at the moment is a flawed public policy," said Larry Minnix, president of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, a trade group for nonprofit providers of long-term care. "The current two alternatives - spending it all or gaming the system - are not psychologically healthy for what I call the middle-class poor, which is what most of us will become if we live long enough."

Long-term care is but a piece of the huge Medicaid pie, about a quarter of the \$321 billion that will be spent by the program this year, according to the Congressional Budget Office. But it holds a disproportionate place on the national agenda because of the baby boom generation, 78 million strong. Many of the boomers are managing their parents' care, snarled in Medicaid's regulations and hoping to preserve an inheritance to pay for their own old age.

The conundrum Dr. Minnix describes - spending it all on long-term care or gaming the system - is peculiar to Medicaid. Unlike Social Security or Medicare, to which all Americans contribute during their working years in exchange for a modest monthly check and medical care in retirement, Medicaid is a means-tested program.

It is Medicaid's demand of impoverishment - to be eligible, applicants must have just \$2,000 in cash - that has spurred the growth of a cottage industry of elder-care lawyers. They counsel older middle-class people, sometimes at the behest of their children, how to legally rid themselves of assets in the face of nursing home bills that, in major metropolitan areas like New York City, often exceed \$100,000 a year.

Methods include outright gifts of cash or real estate, certain kinds of trusts and annuities, and an emotionally difficult process whereby one spouse disavows financial responsibility for the other. It is widely assumed that many such loopholes will soon close under pressure from the states, which shoulder almost half of Medicaid's costs, or about \$138 billion this year.

At a recent hearing in Washington, the director of the Congressional Budget Office, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, supported tightening regulations, with a caveat. "It is unlikely," Mr. Holtz-Eakin testified, "that imposing those additional restrictions would have more than a modest impact on Medicaid's expenditures" for long-term care.

Mr. Holtz-Eakin estimated that the savings would be \$3 billion over 10 years, or less than one one-hundredth of the government's costs.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the agency that runs the two programs, national spending on nursing home care in 2003 was \$111 billion. Medicaid paid almost half, followed by out-of-pocket payment by residents, which covered almost a third. Included in this category is Social Security, the primary source of income for seniors. Private insurance paid less than 8 percent.

Demographic pressure on nursing home financing is enormous, with the number of people over 85, nearly half of them nursing home residents, expected to triple by 2050. And baby boomers will begin turning 65 in six years. In addition, the ability to care for the aged at home is being eroded by social change, including smaller and more scattered families.

President Bush has shown less interest in Medicaid than in Social Security, which is being destabilized by the same forces. But the administration has created a commission to suggest ways to cut \$10 billion in Medicaid's growth over the next five years. A report is due in September.

In April, at a hearing before the House of Representatives, Mr. Holtz-Eakin argued that government aid stood in the way of people buying long-term-care insurance and that rule changes "might encourage" the purchase of those policies. But he said there were other reasons not to buy them, including inadequate inflation protection, generally 5 percent in the best policies, which has not kept pace with nursing home costs. And few people ages 65 to 85 can afford such insurance or meet the underwriting requirements.

One criticism of Medicaid's regulations is that people are allowed to retain ownership of their homes, using various legal strategies, thus sheltering their biggest asset. According to the National Council on Aging, three-quarters of older Americans own homes free of mortgages, worth an average of nearly \$80,000. The council estimates that older Americans have a total of \$1.9 trillion in home equity.

Stephen A. Moses, the president of the Center for Long-Term Care Financing and a longtime critic of what he called "welfare-financed nursing homes," proposes requiring all homeowners to take out a reverse mortgage and spend that money before applying for Medicaid. This approach would end what he calls "inheritance protection for middle-class boomers."

The National Governors Association, in a report issued in June, said it favored reverse mortgages, but not if they left the children of today's nursing home residents with no legacy while America's wealthiest citizens could protect inheritances through estate planning. The governors suggested that anyone using a reverse mortgage be permitted to hold onto \$50,000 or "some other appropriate amount that would be indexed to inflation."

A more aggressive approach is putting liens on houses, some bought in the 1950s for \$20,000 that now would fetch a million dollars. Elder-care lawyers say that in areas of steep real estate appreciation, like California and the suburban counties that ring New York City, such recovery efforts are more frequent.

The dated notion of "Medicaid millionaires" giving away their money and draining the system was debunked last month in a report by the Health Policy Institute at Georgetown University. After an analysis of several federal studies, the report, written by Ellen O'Brien, found that people qualifying for Medicaid gave gifts of less than \$5,000 on average, with a minimal impact on the program.

On the other hand, Dr. O'Brien said in an interview this week, there is compelling data on the typical trajectory to poverty from ages 65 to 85. In those two decades, Dr. O'Brien and others say, a healthy, middle-class woman spends considerable money on her husband's long-term care, is widowed and left to manage on the meager benefits of a surviving spouse, spends almost a third of her income on medical expenses not covered by Medicare, assumes she will never wind up in a nursing home and then does.

"That's the heart of the Medicaid story," Dr. O'Brien said. "It's the 'poor widow' scenario, and it's just horrible."

Readers fight over the Blue Cross cash surplus

The state government is reasonable to revoke the Blues' tax-exempt status if the \$2.2 billion surplus is not refunded to the policyholders who paid the excess health care premiums. The state Legislature's notion that policyholders' excess premiums should fund the state's health benefit payment obligations for those less fortunate is unreasonable. I am amazed that a Republican majority Legislature has arrived at such a desperate money grab scheme.

VIC ST. AMAND
Midland

Not only should the state Legislature revoke Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan's tax-exempt status, the Legislature should investigate the rates assessed to companies and individuals that surely contributed to Blue Cross Blue Shield getting a \$2.2 billion surplus. Something is very wrong when a "non-profit" organization books millions of dollars above and beyond its needs. By all means twist the arm of Blue Cross Blue Shield to "volunteer" to help at-risk state health care programs.

LOUIS LA LONDE
Sault Ste. Marie

That's my money and they want to steal it. Any Blue Cross Blue Shield surplus not needed to insure the future of the operation should be refunded to the policyholders who paid it.

DAVID MILLER RAYBIN
Lathrup Village

As a state-authorized, nonprofit

Squeezing the Blues

Non-profit health insurer Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has a \$2.2 billion surplus. The state Legislature may revoke the insurer's tax-exempt status if it doesn't volunteer to help bail out state health care programs for the poor, which are facing severe cuts or elimination. Is this a reasonable request?

YES 39% NO 61%

Uncle Sam wants you

To identify potential military enlistees, the Pentagon has hired a private marketing firm to help compile an extensive database about high school and college students. Is this an unwarranted violation of privacy?

insurer, Blue Cross Blue Shield must insure everyone; it is not allowed to cherry pick like for-profit insurance companies.

Before we start wailing about the amount of surplus, how much should it have in reserve? With the skyrocketing cost of health insurance, across the board, one could make the reasoned argument that it is merely being prudent.

R. CEDAR
Center

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is a fine organization benefiting millions who pay the premiums and many who don't by Blue Cross Blue Shield's own choice. The surplus is justified.

The Legislature has no right to extort millions of hard-earned dollars from us.

ANTHONY J. TROSZAK
Livonia

Mother Teresa once said the world will be judged by how we treat the poor. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, with a \$2.2 billion surplus, has a golden opportunity to put this in effect for Michigan. The state, which is facing cuts or elimination of the health care program for the poor, could use some of the surplus since much of the surplus is from tax-exemption. Help the poor or face the loss of tax-exemption.

FRANK JOHN HRABELSKI
Berlin Township

The reserves represent only \$480 per Blue Cross Blue Shield member. It wouldn't take much of an epidemic or catastrophe to wipe this out in one year.

JERRE MOORE
Prudenville

I contribute to Blue Cross Blue Shield from my salary and that is how that system is funded. I am quite frankly tired of having to keep putting up for the poor when for the most part that is a chosen lifestyle.

CHARLENE MATTOX
China, Mich.

Blue Cross Blue Shield needs to refund the insured in addition to reducing rates.

CHUCK SAKACH
Garden City

Children First

A cycle of despair leads to tragedies

June 27, 2005

BY L.L. BRASIER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Letitia Johnson goes on trial Tuesday, accused of burning her boyfriend's toddler to death in a bathtub of scalding water.

Shocking? Yes. Surprising? No.

Johnson of Orion Township fits the profile of women who stand accused or have been convicted of killing their small children or stepchildren recently in metro Detroit.

She is young, uneducated, poor, unmarried and involved with an abusive man.

It's a constellation that can spell disaster for children, say experts who study infanticide.

"That can be a really toxic combination," said Michelle Oberman, author of "Mothers Who Kill Their Children: Understanding the Acts of Susan Smith to the 'Prom Mom' " (New York University Press, 2001).

While middle- and upper-class women sometimes kill their children, poor women, with little schooling or parenting skills and isolated from the general community, are at special risk, she said.

"A woman who is not terribly stable, who is young, poorly educated and not well situated, may not have access to good medical care or a support system," said Oberman, a professor at Santa Clara University School of Law. "She may have few parenting skills and lack impulse control. She may bring with her an abusive background, and feels isolated. It can be a lethal mixture."

It proved lethal for several area children in recent years. Among those killed since 2002: three newborns who were smothered or drowned; a 2-year-old burned with cigarette butts then beaten to death by her stepmother, and a 2-year-old daughter strangled in her bed by her mother.

Their mothers were between the ages of 16 and 29. Most were poor and uneducated and only one was married. Most recently, Shontelle Cavanaugh, 24, of Pontiac was charged with first-degree murder earlier this month. Police say she smothered her 9-month-old daughter, Simone, June 6 by placing her hand over the baby's mouth. A trial date has not been set.

Few explanations

The rash of such killings in metro Detroit has perplexed and frustrated law enforcement.

"We've seen these cases periodically, but I can't recall seeing them in such a concentrated group," said Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley. "What's saddest about it is there are so many people who would have taken these babies, raised them and kept them safe."

The story that will play out before Oakland County Circuit Judge Rudy Nichols on Tuesday will be one of poverty, violence and despair.

Johnson, 28, charged with first-degree murder, was ill-equipped to take care of Jasmine Phillips, 22 months old and the daughter of Johnson's on-again, off-again boyfriend, Louie Phillips Jr.

Johnson, a high school dropout deemed "slow" by her family, already had six children -- all under age 8 -- by four different fathers. One of the fathers was in prison and none paid child support.

The relationship between Johnson and Phillips was violent, according to court records.

"He pulled me, slapped me and grabbed me by my hair," Johnson complained in an April 2001 request for a personal protection order against Phillips, at that time the father of one of her children.

HELP

Feeling overwhelmed by the demands of taking care of small children? Help is available, including classes and people to talk to.

- Oakland County Youth Assistance offers referrals and lists of parenting classes. Call 248-858-0051.

- Catholic Social Services, serving metro Detroit, offers evening parenting classes, individual counseling and substance abuse treatment. Fees are on a sliding scale and most insurances are accepted. In Royal Oak, call 248-548-4044.

JASMINE PHILLIPS, 22 MONTHS
SCALDED IN A TUB

Waterford, 248-666-8870, and Pontiac, 248-334-3595.

- Hegira Programs, TV Prevention Center, provides an 8-week parenting course using the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting program. The classes are held in Inkster and Westland. Call 734-513-7598.

- Families Anonymous holds weekly meetings for families struggling with substance

The court ordered Phillips to stay away from her, but soon she had another child by him, and they were all living together in a two-bedroom apartment in Orion Township.

Johnson became pregnant with her seventh child. Then Phillips started bringing around tiny Jasmine Phillips, his daughter from a relationship he had with Jamila Lawrence of Pontiac.

Johnson, police and prosecutors say, was jealous of Lawrence and resented the little girl.

On the night of Dec. 19, while Phillips was at work, Johnson placed Jasmine in a bathtub. Police would later examine the hot water tank and find the gauge set at 147 degrees, enough to cause serious burns within seconds.

Johnson admitted to police she bathed the child, but insisted the burns were from cleaning products she used on the tub prior to the bath.

She spread petroleum jelly on the child, diapered her and put her on a mattress. Jasmine died that night or early the next morning.

Prosecutors plan to present to jurors a note Johnson allegedly wrote to a fellow inmate after she was jailed following Jasmine's death.

The note was admitted into evidence during pretrial hearings.

"I didn't want to take care of anybody else's kids," the note reportedly said. "I just wanted to hurt her, not kill her. ... I was mad because he kept bringing her around."

Johnson gave birth to her seventh child while in jail. Her children were placed with relatives.

Johnson's attorney, Diana Bare, plans to argue that Johnson did not intend to kill the child. And she hopes the jury will look at the circumstances of Johnson's life.

"We are demonizing these women," Bare said, "when what we need to do is look at all the variables; and that's what I'm hoping this jury will do."

Domestic pressure

Like Johnson, Nikole Frederick was a tired, overwhelmed, angry stepmother. At age 23, she had a 5-year-old daughter, plus a 1-year-old son she shared with John Shawley, who was unemployed and also had a history of abuse.

Shawley had two daughters from an earlier relationship, Ann Marie Shawley, 2, and Linda Shawley, 5. When he brought them home, there were four children crammed into a small Novi house trailer.

Frederick, too, was uneducated, poor and lacked parenting skills.

On Labor Day, 2003, she began spanking Ann Marie and by the next morning had beaten her into a coma. The child died in a hospital of brain injuries. Frederick is serving a life sentence.

Thirty miles north of where Ann Marie died, Brenda Drayton, 29, also poor, uneducated and unstable -- she had struggled with homelessness and mental illness for years -- allegedly strangled her 2-year-old daughter, Lyah, as the child slept in their filthy Genesee County home a few days after Thanksgiving Day, 2004.

Drayton goes on trial Aug. 23, charged with first-degree murder.

Options overlooked

Some women kill their babies the moment they are born. Despite new laws that allow desperate or confused mothers to drop off newborns at hospitals, police or fire stations, three women have killed their babies recently and are serving prison sentences.

- Selena Jones was 16 when she gave birth in a bathroom at Providence Hospital in 2002 and drowned the full-term girl in the toilet. She was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 2 to 15 years in prison last December.

•In September 2002, Carmen Rappuhn, 24, an unmarried former special education student and grocery clerk, killed her baby in the bathroom of the Springfield Township home she shared with her parents. She was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to 18 to 50 years in prison.

•Christine Bednar, 25, with two children, an unemployed husband and a pile of unpaid bills, killed her newborn in the bathroom of her mobile home in Highland Township Jan. 30. She will be sentenced in July.

"We paint these women as monsters," Oberman said. "But this is really a reflection of who we are as a society."

Oberman said churches, schools, hospitals, extended families and even neighbors need to do a better job of reaching out to women who are ill-prepared to handle the enormous task of raising a child.

"We look at these cases and there is blood on more than one set of hands. We want to protect us from them, but we are them.

"They are part of us, so we have to start thinking less about punishment and more about solutions."

Contact L.L. BRASIER at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

Sunday, June 26, 2005

Legislature divided on decision to cut prison Granholm looks to close one near Baldwin; many Republicans hope a U.P. camp is chosen

The Detroit News

LANSING -- State leaders will mothball a northern Michigan prison this year to save money, but which facility to vacate has emerged as an issue pitting Republicans against Democrats and two struggling counties against each other.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm and state Corrections Director Pat Caruso have targeted a Michigan prison for teen offenders, near Baldwin, between Traverse City and Grand Rapids. They estimate a savings of \$7.5 million next year by moving its inmates elsewhere.

Republican lawmakers, citing the economic blow the impoverished area would suffer with the loss of 230 corrections officer jobs, have rejected that idea. They want to shutter an Upper Peninsula prison in a converted state mental hospital at Newberry and a Manistique prison camp, estimating that would save \$12 million.

Budget legislation closing the Upper Peninsula prison and camp "will not pass my desk," Granholm pledged last week during a rally of U.P. residents and corrections workers. The governor accused lawmakers of partisan maneuvering that ignores an analysis showing the privately run Baldwin prison is too costly.

"Republicans want to keep the Baldwin prison open in defiance of their own auditor general's report," she said.

The state auditor general reported Michigan's contract guarantees the prison owner, GEO Group, a rate of \$75.81 a day per inmate. That is a higher cost than all but four of the other 37 prisons in the corrections system, according to the report.

But Republican Rep. Jack Brandenburg of Harrison Township, head of a House panel that debated the issue in April, said the plan to close the state's only privately operated prison "sends a terrible message" to firms that want to do business here.

Democrats accuse the Republican majority of voting to protect prison jobs in Republican territory while sacrificing such jobs in the more-Democratic central U.P.

Prison Debate

Closing youth facility would be best choice

June 25, 2005

Gov. Jennifer Granholm made the right call in vowing to veto a budget that would keep an inefficient, privately run youth prison in Baldwin open while closing the Newberry Correctional Facility in the Upper Peninsula.

In the recent debate over the closings, legislators made some ridiculous assumptions that make for lousy prison policy.

Essentially, Republican and Democrat lawmakers argued over which area -- Baldwin represented by Republicans or Newberry represented by Democrats -- would get hurt the most by a prison closing. Legislators apparently think state government is an employment agency.

For years, politicians and officials have complained, rightly, that money spent on prisons, while necessary, was diverting money from more beneficial programs, such as education, economic development and roads.

Each prison costs, on average, \$30 million a year to run. It's silly to argue, during a fiscal crisis, that the state should do its best to keep every prison open, whether it's needed or not.

The Michigan Department of Corrections has taken steps to manage the prison population by diverting more offenders to community corrections programs, developing programs to reduce recidivism, and sending fewer parolees back to prison for technical violations.

Michigan was one of the few states to lower its prison population in 2003 and 2004.

That's a good thing.

For now, the state can close only one prison -- and the youth prison in Baldwin is the best choice. A compromise to keep both it and Newberry open would be irresponsible, given the state's fiscal crisis. It would also set a bad precedent.

Politicians and the public should not regard prisons as jobs programs that ought to remain open at all costs.

Kalamazoo woman appointed to state board

Friday, June 24, 2005

Kalamazoo Gazette

Anita M. Lacy of Kalamazoo, director of Foster Education Resource Network, has been appointed to the state's Committee on Juvenile Justice.

She is among five people recently appointed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm to the independent state-level body, which provides leadership and policy direction for administration of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act in Michigan.

Lacy was appointed to represent people under 24 years old for a term expiring March 15, 2006. She succeeds Edward Rivera, who has resigned.

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DN 6/27

Don't forget children

In the June 12 article regarding juvenile justice in Wayne County ("Juvenile system under fire"), one key component seemed to be over-

looked — the kids within the juvenile justice system. Their stories are heartbreaking and the resources remain scarce, regardless of budget numbers.

The larger picture is a population of adolescents who need help or they are going to be lost. The opportunity still exists to give these kids some hope, but it isn't cheap and it is forever shadowed by political attacks on the system. Please enlighten readers on the scope of this problem and maybe they won't mind so much how their tax dollars are being spent.

H. JOHNSON
Plymouth

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Homeless shelter seeks funds to restore 24-hour service

Agency says getting indigents off the street will boost city's image during All-Star Game, Super Bowl.

By Judy Lin / The Detroit News 6/26/05

DETROIT -- A homeless center is making a pitch to the businesses that stand to gain the most from the Major League Baseball All-Star Game and NFL Super Bowl in Detroit: Help the indigent off the streets and improve downtown's image.

The Neighborhood Service Organization's walk-in center at Third Street and Martin Luther King Blvd. has launched a campaign to solicit donations from downtown businesses and private foundations. Sheilah Clay, president and CEO of the group, says the community stands to benefit tremendously when the homeless have a place to go.

The group was forced to end 24-hour service in March due to funding cuts from the city of Detroit. Officials at the center say they are about \$300,000 short of the \$1.2 million needed annually to serve people around the clock.

"When we stopped 24-hour service, there was an increase in homeless going up to the patrons (around Comerica Park). There seemed to be more of them, and they were more aggressive," Clay said. "I think there is a level of concern among the businesses."

A nearby hospital has agreed to pick up the tab for a nurse, but other donations remain sparse. Clay said it would be nice to get one-time contributions, but she's more interested in long-term commitments. "The homeless are here 365 days," she said.

Of an estimated 30,000 homeless in Detroit, the walk-in center receives up to 400 daily in the winter and between 100 and 200 daily in the summer. For decades, the center has served as the last stop for the most unwanted, taking in those that don't qualify for other shelters because of mental illness, physical illnesses and substance abuse problems.

"We're the safety net for the entire homeless population of Detroit," said Ronald Riggs, director of the walk-in center. "We accept them regardless of need."

The center, which scaled back from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays and closed on weekends, has a nurse on site, mental health and veteran outreach workers, and help with job training, finding housing and filling out welfare assistance applications.

Riggs says the facility provides basic human needs that most people take for granted. "They can take a shower, wash their clothes and eat a meal," he said.

Officials say the price of losing 24-hour service has already proven deadly. On April 14, a Michigan State Police trooper shot Eric Williams, 40, near the New Detroiter Bar near Greektown. Clay said Williams likely would have been at the walk-in clinic had it been open.

"We want to take care of our consumers," Clay said. "We can't do it when they're just standing on the street corner when they have no where to go."

222-2072 or jlin@detnews.com.

Monday, June 27, 2005

Macomb joins in homeless tracking County will share data with Oakland and Wayne on those who come in for services.

By Jim Lynch / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- The effort to track Metro Detroit's homeless population is getting a boost with Macomb County joining Oakland and Wayne this month in an online system that links all agencies that provide services to the homeless.

The Homeless Management Information System is designed, in part, to provide communities with a better sense of their problems.

The Macomb Homeless Coalition recently hired Heather Uhley as a part-time administrator to help bring the county online. Today, participating Macomb County agencies will begin signing up.

For Macomb County, the new effort comes during a particularly bad year in terms of homeless people who have died. So far in 2005, eight deaths have been reported, compared to five reported last year. In 2001, two homeless people died.

Joey Petras, 48, has fallen on hard times since April. He has been hospitalized three times and he has lost his job and his housing. On Thursday, Petras went to the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team in Roseville to see what his options were.

"I think that would be very valuable," he said of the tracking system.

By sharing information between agencies, service providers such as Jimetta Lewis at the Macomb County shelter can more clearly see clients' situations -- where they've been before, what assistance they've received and what assistance they're eligible for.

"All we'll have to do is push a couple of buttons, and we'll be able to see the gaps in the system," Lewis said.

Carrie Fortune, coordinator for the Macomb Homeless Coalition, said she hopes to have all the county agencies that provide homeless assistance signed up by Feb. 1.

What's happening
The Macomb Homeless Coalition is moving to bring the Homeless Management Information System

online. The system allows homeless agencies to share information about the population they serve.

- Earlier this month, the group hired Heather Uhley as part-time administrator for the system.

- Today, the coalition will begin adding data from agencies around the county.

You can reach Jim Lynch at (586) 468-0520 or jlynch@detnews.com.

Calloused hands, sore backs but three families in homes

Kathie Marchlewski, Midland Daily News

06/25/2005

It's been 16 days since Midland County Habitat for Humanity took its place within the Michigan-wide Jimmy Carter Work Project and got to work building three homes on acre plots on Yoder Drive. More than 9,000 nails have been pounded into more than 1,800 2 x 4s. There are hundreds of calloused hands and likely a few sore backs.

The homes are complete – with freshly painted walls, brand-new appliances, a new-carpet smell and three families eager to start moving in.

"Not only was our house built, it was built with love," said a tearful Connie McDonald who, along with her husband Larry and children Kaylin and Doug, are ready to haul boxes of belongings, furniture and beds into their new home. They'll have to wait until next week when the mortgage is signed, something that is expected to take place July 1.

They've been working side by side with volunteers all week, and say it's been hard to leave at night. Kaylin, 14, is thrilled with her new room, which she is thinking she might paint pink. "And my closet is three times bigger than the one I have now," she said. Her brother, Doug, 9, clapped his hands as he stood in his new bedroom, pointing at the cable wire poking out of the wall. He can't wait to plug in his television.

Each of the families is excited about its upcoming move, and still in shock over how quickly the houses went up. "We feel very blessed," said Kami Wade who, along with sons William Hopkins and Michael Wade, will be the McDonalds' next-door neighbors. "Everybody working together was amazing."

The last few weeks have been emotional ones, but no day as emotional as the dedication of homes that took place Friday. "It's been overwhelming," Lisa Walz said through tears as she thanked volunteers and sponsors. She's eager to move from the two-bedroom apartment she and her three teenage boys have been renting down the street. "We have our home and we have where our stuff is stored, so let's start moving," she said.

The dedication, which took place simultaneously with more than 200 others built during the Blitz Build orchestrated for the Carter project, marks the end of hammering in heat, then rain, then more heat.

"We started out in a swamp and ended up in a sauna," said Habitat Executive Director Gary Jones.

The Rev. Charles Keyworth of First United Methodist Church called the project, Midland's first-ever three-house, three-family build, a reminder of God's love in action.

Community-wide, organizations large and small came together to offer labor, food and materials. The Dow Chemical Co., which donates Styrofoam insulation for all Habitat homes built in North America and is a longtime sponsor of Habitat, along with the First United Methodist Church and Chemical Bank and Trust, donated \$65,000 for each of the homes to be built. The three sponsoring organizations also supplied most of the volunteers. Though some were repeats, there were more than 850 signatures on the Blitz's sign-in sheets.

The homes mark the 46th, 47th and 48th built by Habitat of Midland County. Two others under way this year will bring the total to 50.

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In Russia, growing hostility slows adoptions by foreigners

■ Rate plunges one-third this year; killing of boy in Illinois by U.S. parent triggers resentment.

By PETER FINN
Washington Post

MOSCOW — Marina is almost a year old now and still living in an orphanage in the Krasnodar region of southern Russia.

The prospect of a new life in Texas for the girl, who only months ago seemed tantalizingly close to her prospective mother, is now uncertain.

Ellen Butki, 42, who teaches English as a second language at the University of Texas at Austin, traveled to the orphanage last year.

"When they brought Marina in, she looked at me and gave me a big smile," recalled Butki, whose 3-year-old daughter, Natalia, was adopted in Russia.

Butki agreed to adopt Marina. As required by Russian law, she flew home to wait to be called back for a court hearing several weeks later. She is still waiting.

Growing political and public hostility to foreign adoptions, combined with bureaucratic bungling and new rules, have played havoc



Photo courtesy of Ellen Butki

While Ellen Butki waits in Texas, the adoption of baby Marina remains on hold. Ill will toward foreigners and red tape are blamed.

MORE ONLINE

Find a gateway to Michigan adoption agencies at detnews.com/nation.

with the hopes of prospective parents such as Butki.

Foreign adoptions in Russia in

Mich. clearinghouse

■ Get adoption information at Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange, 330 W. Michigan Ave., P.O. Box 6128, Jackson, MI 49204; (517) 783-6273 (outside Michigan); (800) 589-6273 (in Michigan); (517) 783-5904 (fax)

the first few months of the year dropped to about a third of what they were at the same time last year, a U.S. Embassy official in Moscow said.

Americans adopted about 5,800 Russian children in 2004, which accounted for nearly 75 percent of all foreign adoptions in the country. Before the decline, Russia had been the second-most-popular country, after China, for adoptions by Americans.

The increasingly difficult atmosphere was triggered by Russian outrage over the killing of a 6-year-old Russian boy in Illinois by his American parent.

The case has drawn wide press coverage, prompting a range of responses, from self-examination about why Russians have adopted so few of the 700,000 orphans in their country to charges that foreigners have bought and abused Russian children.

6/26
detnews.com

Migrant workers find reasons to stay

Monday, June 27, 2005

By Nardy Baeza Bickel
The Grand Rapids Press

For decades, thousands of workers lived in Michigan for just part of the year, picking strawberries, asparagus, blueberries and apples.

But many migrant workers are staying longer, a trend that so far has been noticed but not documented. This can make it difficult for agencies set up to help those workers and their families.

Advocates hope to address that problem with a statewide farm worker census funded with a \$30,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

An estimated 45,000 to 125,000 workers come to harvest Michigan's crops every year. Ruben Garcia is among them, spending nine months a year in Michigan.

Every February, he leaves his house in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, to work as a seasonal worker at Zelenka Nursery in Ottawa County.

Nurseries are becoming the fastest-growing industry in agriculture, generating \$711 million in annual sales, and the work keeps Garcia employed most of the year.

"It's nice here, there's always a lot of work," said Garcia, 53, who spends his days weeding plants and loading them into trucks for delivery to stores.

After helping out with Christmas trees in November, he will head back to Texas, where he visits friends before returning to his home in Mexico for Christmas.

Javier Sandoval, 32, who lives in Florida most of the year, said he would like to stay in Michigan a little longer. Finding a job at a nursery would pave the way, he said.

Sandoval spent a recent morning harvesting strawberries and the afternoon preparing plants for next year's season at a farm in Kent County.

"I'll work in whatever I can," he said. "After this, we'll do zucchinis in Sparta, and when the season is over, I'll go back to working oranges."

Martha Gonzalez-Cortes, chairwoman of the Interagency Migrant Services Committee that coordinates the delivery of services for migrant and seasonal farm laborers, said agencies believe more workers are choosing to stick around every year, but no one knows for sure.

"It's almost impossible to plan your building and services deliveries if you don't know how many people you have month to month, or if you're spending your resources wisely," she said.

Gonzalez-Cortes, a former farm worker, said when her family started making its way to Michigan from Florida and Texas in the 1970s, seasonal workers would stay in the area for three months, leaving in September.

Now, more are choosing to stay.

"It seems that the industry has changed and farm workers are staying a more extended period of time," she said. "And we're still operating under the presumption that they stay for three months at a time, so our efforts don't really match up at this point in time."

Nursing-home care: Backgrounds, crimes

Friday, June 24, 2005

If you have a loved one in a nursing home, you've got a stake in the state's recent effort to purge employee ranks of criminals. However, in pursuing a good thing, the state shouldn't over-react. Attorney General Mike Cox recently announced the results of two studies conducted by his Health Care Fraud Division. One sampled the state's 40,000 Certified Nurse's Aides (CNAs) for people with criminal backgrounds; the other study looked at backgrounds of 618 nursing-home employees (from CNAs to administrators) in four facilities in Michigan.

The studies gave consistent results:

Of the 5,500 CNA backgrounds reviewed, 9 percent had a total of 836 outstanding criminal warrants for their arrest; 3 percent had past criminal convictions.

In a smaller second study, 58 employees (more than 9 percent of the 618 reviewed) had a total of 101 outstanding warrants, and 689 had past criminal convictions.

These weren't just drunken-driving or bad-check charges. Criminal histories of the employees included homicides, armed robberies, criminal sexual conduct, weapons, drug and retail fraud crimes.

But surely these criminals on nursing-home staffs aren't committing further crimes on the job and among their elderly charges, are they? The Attorney General's office undertook the two studies after his Health Care Fraud Division found that 25 percent of employees charged with crimes against residents in the past three years had prior criminal convictions.

Moreover, these findings come three years after Michigan's first law requiring criminal background checks of prospective residential-care facility workers took effect.

It appears that one loophole in the law is its grandfather provision. Staff hired before 2002 are exempt under the law. This is disturbing. People assume, when they place a loved one in the care of a professional facility, that the staff is made up of good, trustworthy employees. It is small comfort to find that no more than 10 percent of the workers may be homicidal, drug-pushing sex fiends.

Thus, with the Attorney General's backing, state lawmakers are revisiting the 2002 law. They want to do away with the grandfather clause and toughen up the law by requiring, not just initial, but annual background checks on all employees.

We checked with Jackson's Ganton Retirement Centers to get an idea of the impact of this change. Ganton, which enjoys high ratings from state regulators, routinely does background checks on all new employees. The cost is \$10 per check (each done by the Michigan State Police), or potentially \$3,500 for annual checks of Ganton's 350 or so employees.

That hardly seems cost-prohibitive and, while we cannot imagine a \$10 check being exhaustive, it apparently highlights any criminal background on the existing state database.

But while we applaud the Attorney General's desire to purge the nursing-home community of criminals who are a menace, we also caution lawmakers:

Every new session of the Legislature wants to enact tougher laws. Indeed, what Attorney General Cox found demands a more vigorous effort to weed out employees who could be a threat to our most vulnerable citizens.

However, we do not want to see the state's regulatory zeal driving small facility operators out of business. Proceed with intent to toughen the law, but with due concern for cost and regulatory implications.

The Jackson Citizen Patriot

Cox works to protect seniors

By Matt Whetstone, Cadillac News
6/27/05

LANSING -- State Attorney General Mike Cox desires swift action on legislation that would protect seniors and vulnerable adults.

The legislature should act "as soon as we can to keep Michigan's most vulnerable citizens safe," said Cox spokesman Allison Pierce.

The proposed legislation comes two weeks after Cox announced results of two studies that reveal almost 10 percent of employees caring for about 100,000 Michigan seniors and vulnerable adults have criminal backgrounds.

Pierce said the legislation should be introduced this week in the senate and Cox desires quick action. It was initially introduced by senators Patricia Birkholz, Tony Stamas and Jud Gilbert.

"The results of the studies conducted by my office were shocking and we are taking immediate steps to improve the protections offered by Michigan's residential care system," Cox said in a statement. "I will do everything in my power to safeguard the residents in these facilities from preventable risk."

In total scope, the three-bill package would expand the scope of the Adult Foster Care Facility Licensing Act and the Public Health Code to require the state's 5,000 residential care facilities to conduct criminal background checks of all employees and to conduct checks annually. It also enhances the criminal sanctions for failing to comply with the requirements of the statutes. (For more on the sanctions of the proposal, see the accompanying information.)

Tara O'Brien, administrator at Green Acres in Cadillac, said the proposal would be very beneficial in improving safety policies. Plus, she said it would be easy and inexpensive to conduct annual checks.

When conducting checks, O'Brien said she gets on a Web site and enters the individual's information. In a short time, the system conducts the check.

"Currently when you hire someone you do a background check. Beyond that there aren't any further checks done," she said. "This would be another good thing to do

to make sure the residents are well taken care of."

During the investigation, it was discovered that of the 5,500 Certified Nurse's Aides (CNAs) studied, 9 percent had a total of 386 outstanding criminal warrants and 3 percent, or 170, had past criminal convictions.

The second study looked at entire employee populations and it was discovered of the 618 studied that 9 percent had 101 outstanding warrants and 11 percent, or 68, had past criminal convictions.

To report abuse, theft or fraud to the attorney general, call 800-24-ABUSE or go online to www.mich.gov/ag.

Proposed enhancements

Attorney General Mike Cox has made several proposals that would enhance criminal background statutes for prospective residential care facility employees.

Elimination of grandfather provision, which allow dangerous individuals to remain employed

Expansion of the crimes covered by the statutes to disqualify applicants with past fraud or theft convictions

Inclusion of convictions for misdemeanor drug offenses and felony convictions

Require criminal background checks at hiring and on a yearly basis

Expansion of criminal background check requirement beyond staff providing direct care to residents to all employees

Strengthening of criminal sanctions to make them proportionate to the risk the individuals pose to vulnerable adults

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2005

Governor Granholm Makes Appointments

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced the following appointments and designations:

Eastern Michigan University Board of Control

Floyd Clack of Flint, former Michigan state representative and retired teacher and counselor for Flint Community Schools. Mr. Clack is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 31, 2006. He succeeds Steven Gordon who has resigned.

The Eastern Michigan University Board of Control is responsible for enacting, amending, and repealing rules, bylaws and regulations for the conduct of its business and for the government of its institution. This appointment is subject to Article V, Section 6 of the Michigan State Constitution of 1963. The appointment stands confirmed unless disapproved by the Senate within 60 days.

Mackinac Bridge Authority

Barbara J. Brown of St. Ignace, attorney in private practice. She previously served as Judge of the 92nd Judicial District. Ms. Brown is appointed to represent Democrats for a term expiring June 30, 2010. She succeeds Jack LaSalle, who has resigned.

This appointment is subject to Article V, Section 6 of the Michigan State Constitution of 1963. The appointment stands confirmed unless disapproved by the Senate within 60 days.

Michigan Task Force on Elder Abuse

Kathleen J. Holycross of Bloomfield Hills, president and CEO of Visiting Nurse Association, Inc. Ms. Holycross is appointed for a term expiring at the pleasure of the Governor.

Jules B. Olsman of Huntington Woods, president of Olsman, Mueller & James, P.C. law firm. Mr. Olsman is appointed for a term expiring at the pleasure of the Governor.

Dorothy E. Jones of Ypsilanti, retired member of United Auto Workers. Ms. Jones is designated as Chairperson of the Michigan Task Force on Elder Abuse, to serve for a term expiring at the pleasure of the Governor.

The Michigan Task Force on Elder Abuse, established by Executive Order 2005-11, is charged with identifying resources and changes in law that will assist in the prevention of elder abuse. Task force members will review current state efforts to prevent and prosecute elder abuse, identify and prioritize issues and challenges that must be addressed to prevent abuse, and provide recommendations to develop a plan to generate public awareness on the scope of elder abuse.

These appointments are not subject to disapproval.

State Exposition and Fairgrounds Authority Board

Mark T. Gaffney of Dearborn, president of Michigan AFL-CIO. Mr. Gaffney is designated to serve as Chairperson of the State Exposition and Fairgrounds Authority Board for a term expiring at the pleasure of the Governor.

The State Exposition and Fairgrounds Authority Board is a bi-partisan panel responsible for sponsoring the Michigan State Fair and for promoting additional year-round events at the site. The group is also charged with the development and submission of a rolling 5-year operational plan to the Department of Management and Budget, the legislature, and the Governor.

This designation is not subject to disapproval.

Michigan Veterans' Memorial Park Commission

Gail M. Anthony of Rockford, partnership coordinator of Homeland Security with the National Guard of Michigan and former officer with the United States Air Force. Ms. Anthony is reappointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 18, 2007.

Kenneth D. Bing of Mt. Clemens, honorably discharged from the United States Marine Corps and 127th Air National Guard at Selfridge. Mr. Bing is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 18, 2006. He succeeds Jon D. Murray whose term has expired.

John E. Reeves of Southfield, served in the Vietnam War and was honorably discharged from the United States Army. Mr. Reeves is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 18, 2007. He succeeds Charles Merz whose term has expired.

Pamela M. Vacketta of East Lansing, served in active duty for four years in the United States Marine Corps Security Force Battalion Atlantic. Ms. Vacketta is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 18, 2006. She succeeds Alphonso Todd, Jr. whose term has expired.

The Michigan Veterans' Memorial Park Commission assists the Department of Management and Budget in the development, management and maintenance of the Michigan Veterans' Memorial Park. These appointments are not subject to disapproval.

Earn your GED through television

Detroit program to provide classes

By LORI HIGGINS
FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

Detroit, with its high rate of illiteracy and large number of high school dropouts, may have found a way to take excuses away from those who say they can't afford, or don't have time, to earn a GED.

Now, residents can prepare for the test from the comfort of home for little or no cost.

The GED VideoClassroom @Home Project starts July 1 on

cable television and will include a 22-week series of classes to help dropouts take the test that could earn them a high school equivalency diploma.

The General Educational Development test assesses proficiency in language arts, social studies, science, geography and math.

The Detroit program is part of Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's urban agenda that aims at improving lifelong learning, said Jamaine Dickens, spokesman for the Detroit Cable Communications Commission.

"Many people defer continuing that education because they

don't have the time to go to the classes on a regular basis," Dickens said Friday.

Classes will air initially in the afternoon, then be repeated at night. Those who don't have cable can view the programs at one of the 13 Detroit Public Library locations. And those who need help can get it through Marygrove College, which will provide daily assistance at the Detroit Workforce Development Department.

The program will address the difficulty employers have finding qualified employees, Anthony Stinnette, project coordinator for Marygrove's

Continuing education

What: GED VideoClassroom @Home Project

When: July 1-9 orientation; classes begin July 10.

Broadcast: From 2-3 p.m. daily, with rebroadcast from 7-8 p.m. From 3-6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, a series of GED test preparation programs will air.

Where to catch the classes:

Channel 22 in Detroit, Comcast Cable.

Cost: None for the program; there may be a cost for workbooks.

No cable? Visit one of the 13 Detroit Public Library locations.

For more information: Call 313-664-5504 for general information; 313-833-4042 for library information.

Learning Resource Center, said Friday. He advises residents who didn't get a high school diploma to not delay getting a GED.

"Each year they put this off they have to compete with another graduating class from high school," Stinnette said.

The program is part of partnership among the commission, the workforce department, Marygrove and the library, as well as Comcast and the Department of Health and Wellness Promotion's sub

See GED, 4A

GED | Program offers classes via cable

From Page 3A

stance abuse division.

Detroit residents receiving help through the health department's treatment center who don't have a high school diploma will be required to complete the program, Dickens said.

The fact that so many different agencies are working together impressed Margaret Norman, national marketing

manager for Kentucky Educational Television's (KET) enterprise division. KET distributes the materials used in the program nationwide.

The program began in Kentucky in the 1970s as a way to reach rural residents.

"When you broadcast educational television, you can broadcast at times that are going to be more appropriate for nontraditional learners," Nor-

man said Friday.

The assistance Marygrove will provide will be key to addressing the needs of participants who may be struggling or need an extra boost.

For some residents, Stinnette said, "You can't just hand them the workbook and say, 'Go to it.'"

Contact LORI HIGGINS at 248-351-3694 or higgins@freepress.com.

6/25

Granholm's husband asks Midlanders to be mentors

06/24/2005

Cheryl Wade, Midland Daily News

Jennifer Granholm picked what her husband thought was the worst time in their lives to become a mentor to a child. They had three children of their own, he'd just started a business and she was commuting 160 miles to and from work each day.

But Granholm, then attorney general, made good on her mentoring commitment, and into their lives came a girl who'd lived in a car and a shelter, without a dad and with a drug-addicted mother.

Gov. Granholm's husband, First Gentleman Daniel Mulhern, talked to 46 people in Midland Thursday about his initiative, Mentor Michigan. It's a loosely organized movement that recruits volunteers, seeks grant money and helps to promote good practices among mentoring groups.

Mulhern encouraged the audience, which had twice as many women as men, to put the "men" in mentoring and to develop a bold vision for Midland where mentoring is the norm.

Mulhern said nearly 75 percent of juvenile state wards are boys, but 66 percent of mentors are women. Many of these children are being raised by single mothers without obvious male role models, and many women are serving as mentors to boys. Now, it's time for men to get involved, he said.

"It's all about walking the walk, not talking the talk," Mulhern said. "Nothing we could have said would be as good as what Jennifer did."

Mulhern has been mentor to a boy for the past year and believes it's all about "changing the world two lives at a time" – the child's and the mentor's.

He said children who are truant from school and perhaps have begun shoplifting are at "an incredible turning point" in their lives, and mentors have a great opportunity to change the direction of a child's life.

Truancy was an early focus of Midland County Probate Judge Dorene Allen, she said. A court volunteer works to assign mentors to the 20 young people who are in the Juvenile Care Center's outpatient treatment program at any time.

Allen told of a wild-haired, body-pierced youth who was paired with a local minister and who, after their first meeting, said "that guy was awesome," and soon afterward cut his hair and removed his ornaments. The court requires a mentor to spend two hours a week with a child for at least a year.

For those who say they're too busy, it doesn't take extra time to include a child in the everyday things a person or family does: Going for a walk, shopping at the mall, raking the leaves, watching a ball game, cooking a meal, said Terry Dusseau, executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Midland County. He has 50 children, more than 40 of them boys, waiting for mentors.

The event was sponsored by Midland Tomorrow, in cooperation with the Midland Area Chamber of Commerce.

Poor Defendants

Ruling helps assure competent representation

June 24, 2005

Hundreds, maybe thousands, of indigent defendants in Michigan have been denied legal representation due to an unconstitutional state law that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down Thursday.

Now that those appeals can move forward, the state must ensure adequate resources to handle the backlog of cases. That's only right, because the Legislature passed the 1999 law that created this mess.

The high court's 6-3 decision struck down a Michigan law that barred state-paid legal assistance for poor defendants who plead guilty but then want to appeal. More than 90 percent of all felony convictions are obtained by pleas, and serious sentencing errors are common.

The Michigan law prevented redress for defendants who have been inadequately represented, sentenced too harshly, or talked into a guilty plea by a court-appointed attorney who either didn't want to put in the extra work or believed that his or her client couldn't win.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan sued in federal court after the Legislature passed the law that made Michigan the first state in 40 years to take away poor people's right to counsel for their first appeal.

Having the right, and ability, to appeal is especially important in Michigan, where scandalously low pay and high caseloads for court-appointed attorneys have already undercut the constitutional right to adequate legal counsel.

The Supreme Court ruling is in Michigan's economic interest, too, because it will mean less unwarranted jail and prison time, which costs taxpayers millions of dollars a year.

The U.S. Supreme Court has taught Michigan and the nation a timely lesson: The principles of due process and equal protection demand that poor inmates have the same right to legal representation as everyone else.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Dwayne Haywood appointed director of community action and economic opportunity bureau for Department of Human Services

June 27, 2005

Macomb Township resident **Dwayne Haywood** has been appointed director of the Department of Human Services' Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, effective July 11.

In this role, Haywood will be responsible for activities related to DHS weatherization services and community action agency block grants. Haywood replaces Ed LaForge, who resigned earlier this year.

"Dwayne brings a wealth of experience with community service programs from his background as a Department of Human Services' program manager and, more recently, in his role for the city of Detroit," said DHS director Marianne Udow, who made the appointment.

Haywood served as executive director for human services with the city of Detroit from 2002-05 where he was responsible for administering an \$88 million budget including the community services block grant, Department of Juvenile Justice, Low Income Energy Assistance Program and Temporary Assistance to Needy Family grants.

From 2000-02, he worked in the Wayne County DHS (then Family Independence Agency) office in Detroit in personnel and was child care manager for Spectrum Human Services' Calumet Center during 2001-02. Haywood held other positions with state and private agencies from 1992-2000 including children's program manager and children's protective services specialist in Wayne County from 1992-97.

He holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Eastern Michigan University and is a graduate of the John F. Kennedy School Government Leadership Program at Harvard University. He is a U.S. Army veteran honorably discharged in 1981 and a former member of the U.S. Army Reserve.

For Michigan Department of Human Services, Haywood will administer weatherization assistance and block grant funds awarded to Michigan's 30 community action agencies (CAAs). He will advise the department director on CAA and will monitor their performance and activities.

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs